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ABSTRACT

In May 1977, the governing bodies of three professional organizations concerned with vocational home economics education (the American Home Economics Association, the American Vocational Association, and the Home Economics Education Association) formed a coalition. Consisting of two representatives of each organization, the coalition has as its primary objective to increase communication and project a unified thrust and focus on issues related to vocational home economics education. This statement outlines the coalition's main tenets pertaining to the scope of consumer and homemaking education and the contributions each makes to students' development of competence in the basic skills. The first section summarizes the history of the coalition and lists its purposes. Examined next is the significance of vocational education in general and consumer and homemaking education in particular to the quest for functional literacy. The remaining sections outline the specific ways in which consumer and homemaking education can enhance students' development of verbal, reading, writing, mathematical, scientific, analytical, and life management skills. (MN)

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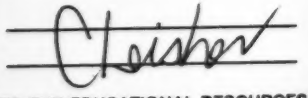

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COALITION OF AHEA, AVA, and HEEA

The Vocational Home Economics Education Coalition, an alliance of three professional organizations, the American Home Economics Association (AHEA), American Vocational Association (AVA), and Home Economics Association (HEEA), has been in operation since May, 1977. The six-member body is composed of two representatives from each of the associations. The general purpose is to increase communication and to project a unified thrust and focus on issues related to vocational home economics education.

Purposes

The original purposes set for the Coalition include the following:

1. Maintain continuous dialogue among professional organizations concerned with vocational home economics education.
2. Identify existing and potential issues of vocational home economics education.
3. Develop a statement regarding vocational home economics education which will serve as a baseline for the analysis of future positions.
4. Review positions on current issues relating to vocational home economics education and facilitate development of consensus among the organizations.
5. Determine various target groups to communicate issues and positions concerning vocational home economics education.

Preface

Although quality in education tends to be a pervasive concern of educators, there has been a renewed emphasis on quality in recent years. The rise of the back-to-basics movement followed by public interest in the various reports concerning quality and excellence in education prompted many educators to review their programs in light of the current curricular concerns.

As home economics educators reviewed their programs and responded to the issue of excellence, they identified the need for a printed statement to be used as a point of reference. Members of the Coalition accepted the challenge of meeting this need. The result is a second Coalition statement. This second statement, A QUEST FOR QUALITY: CONSUMER AND HOMEMAKING EDUCATION IN THE 80s, is intended to supplement the earlier one entitled VOCATIONAL HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION published in 1979.

The purpose of A QUEST FOR QUALITY: CONSUMER AND HOMEMAKING EDUCATION IN THE 80s is to provide a consolidation of selected examples which illustrate contributions that Consumer and Homemaking Education programs make to quality education. The statement is not presumed to be comprehensive. Rather, it is a broad composite of Consumer and Homemaking Education applications targeted toward dominant curricular issues.

Many of the examples used in this statement were synthesized from those submitted by state supervisors of home economics following a request for help from the Coalition. Members of the Coalition gratefully extend their thanks to all those who shared information relevant to the development of this statement and to those who facilitated its publication.

Alberta M. Dobry
Editor

A QUEST FOR QUALITY: CONSUMER AND HOMEMAKING EDUCATION IN THE 80s

Introduction

Literacy in the 80s goes far beyond the original interpretation of reading, writing, and basic computation. *Functional* literacy is now imperative to social-economic survival. Consumer and Homemaking Education, like other areas of Vocational Education, contributes a great deal to the mastery of basic skills. Learners begin at a concrete level—seeing, comprehending, and practicing principles in familiar day-to-day settings. Vocational Education *applies* principles and theories. It shows students how to use basic skills, guides them in mastering the application, and leads students to the selection and utilization of appropriate information in decision-making to solve the daily problems of work and living. Consumer and Homemaking Education supplements basic skill instruction as it facilitates the *use* of those skills in the daily life of students. It is no longer enough to know. It is no longer enough to do. Intelligent persons in an ever increasingly complex society must be able to understand, interpret, and apply basic skills in suitable ways.

Consumer and Homemaking Education teachers do not purport to *teach* singly all basic skills! The Consumer and Homemaking Education programs *do* serve as a vital segment of the whole educational system in bringing basic skills, principles, and theories to life for students in their quest for independence.

Consumer and Homemaking Education is based on the premise that one must develop the necessary understandings and skills to achieve quality in one's life. In work and living, persons communicate with others, utilize available materials and tools, and

determine ways to manage resources. Too often our behavior is contrary to what we know is best. We must develop attitudes to *choose* to live intelligently, to contribute to the social-economic setting, to break barriers to individual well-being in both home and work.

Many have voiced concern regarding the home and family background of today's students. Currence (1984) quoted former Secretary of Education, Terrel Bell, as having said the following:

> We need to place at least some of the credit or blame for student achievement on the home and family situation. . . . When marriages and home life are disturbed and unstable, our youth come to school with frustration, bitterness, and resentment. . . . Broken homes, poverty, and unsuitable living conditions are not conducive to successful schools. A child must be teachable before he or she can be taught. . . .
>
> Families, marriage, and the home . . . have gone through great change over the past few years. . . . The forces that split families apart are still there and the economic pressures that demand two incomes will remain for years to come. (p. 13)

Consumer and Homemaking Education programs also provide to adults, currently caught up in such problems, the abilities needed to break cycles of disadvantagement and move toward self-sufficiency and fulfillment. As there is an increase in numbers of youth and adults with such problems, the need for Consumer and Homemaking Education programs is greater than ever.

Bell stressed the necessity for more effective parenting and a better quality of home life if education is to be improved. Consumer and Homemaking Education programs provide the opportunity for adolescents to gain knowledge and skills essential to become effective parents and to achieve a quality of home life.

The American Home Economics Association's Priority Issues Committee on Support for Secondary and Higher Education (1984) developed a response to *A Nation at Risk*. Their response urged consideration of all life's roles as one of the basic foundations for effective citizenship, for individual development, and for maximum contribution to the nation. In addition, this committee supported *A Nation at Risk* with their statement:

> that education in English and communication skills, in mathematics, sciences, social studies and computer science is a basic foundation for all citizens so they can make professional-occupational, scientific, technological and citizenship contributions to society. It must be recognized, however, that students function at varying levels of achievement, have a wide variety of motives and goals, and must fill a broad spectrum of societal roles, not all of which will require advanced education in the sciences and mathematics. (p. 5)

Further, as future citizens, all students will need to function in such roles as consumers, family members, parents, and employees or employers.

In today's complex world, one of our basic institutions—the family—is faced with monumental problems which puts our nation at risk. Spitze (1984) highlighted the following points:

1. Families are failing to live in harmony
2. Productivity is low
3. Pride in work is lacking
4. Lifestyles such as indulging in smoking, drinking, overeating, and failing to exercise are creating health problems.

The problems that individuals and families face can be lessened. Consumer and Homemaking Education is the unique component of education which strengthens and

improves the quality of life for individuals and families. This is achieved by helping youth and adults gain a better understanding of self and others, especially for a sense of personal worth, so the individual may develop realistic goals and make responsible decisions.

Contributions of Consumer & Homemaking Education to the Basics

Basic Skills

Basic communication skills are defined as the ability to—

- communicate orally in work, home, and social situations.
- read and understand information and directive materials.
- write clear and concise communications to others.
- understand communication as the basic tool which people use in human interactions.

Competence in communication is fundamental to competence in human relationships and to all kinds of group activities. Consumer and Homemaking Education contributes to the development of each of those skills.

Verbal skills. Communicating orally transpires daily in Consumer and Homemaking Education classes. For example, verbal communication is strengthened in classes dealing with consumer issues, family relations, and child development. Role playing, listening, and discussing ideas help develop basic competencies in interpersonal skills needed for home and work.

Reading skills. Reading is emphasized through comparison analysis and interpretation in nutrition, child growth and development as well as physical, emotional, and economic concerns of families. Reading is

stressed in Consumer and Homemaking Education classes through textbook assignments, product labels and directions, magazine articles, and newspapers. Also, library research and vocabulary development are appropriate in such areas as family relations, nutrition education, consumer education, parenting, and child development. Areas such as these have immediate, personal relevance for learners.

Writing skills. Writing is practiced frequently in Consumer and Homemaking Education classes as students prepare various assignments. Written reports and evaluations of classroom and laboratory projects, invitations and thank you notes to resource persons, and term papers are examples of ways students apply grammar, spelling, and thought organization.

The need to communicate in written form effectively is emphasized in two ways. Students are required not only to communicate in writing but also to utilize written forms such as directions, text, and various data presentations which must be interpreted and applied to the learning situation.

Mathematical skills. Application of mathematical skills is made in Consumer and Homemaking Education in such areas as consumer education, food and nutrition, clothing and textiles, and housing and home furnishings. Consumer education provides many opportunities for using mathematical skills. Among them are calculating interest on savings and loans, determining the cost of credit, figuring the cost of an automobile, balancing a bank statement, developing a personal budget, and itemizing total income and expenditures.

Mathematical skills are critical in the food and nutrition area as students increase and decrease standardized recipes, measure

quantities of dry and liquid ingredients, comprehend and use measurement devices such as clocks and dials, and compute the cost of foods and recipes. These skills are also used for interpreting dietary plans and calculating nutrient distributions and calories.

In the clothing and textiles area, mathematical skills are crucial as students plan a wardrobe for a specific amount of money, compare the cost of wardrobe purchases, and compare costs of products for care and upkeep of garments. Other applications of mathematics include identification of the correct pattern size based upon body measurements, determination of yardage needed for the correct pattern size, and cost calculation of the fabric.

As students study housing alternatives, mathematical skills are used in calculating the cost of each type available. Mathematical skills are required in computing the cost of furnishings, furniture, household appliances, and other goods and services related to housing. Additional applications are made in calculating energy ratings of various appliances and energy costs related to monthly billings.

Students in Future Homemakers of America and Home Economics Related Occupations (FHA/HERO) youth organizations utilize mathematical skills throughout the year from the time the budget is planned at the beginning of the year to the time that funds are expended by the end of the year. Work on financial and auditing committees and the planning of special events within specified sums of money also provide opportunities for utilizing mathematical skills.

Scientific skills. Consumer and Homemaking Education programs include scientific principles which can provide personal meaning to learning through experiences in

areas such as food and nutrition, clothing and textiles, and housing and home furnishings. As an applied field, Consumer and Homemaking Education draws heavily upon biology, chemistry, and physics for science principles related to food and nutrition. Personal meaning is given to biology through applications in digestion, the stimulation of color and odor of foods related to the flow of gastric juices, the nature and action of digestive enzymes, and enzyme sources. Other examples are food preservation applications including the action of bacteria and mold on foods, sterilization, chilling and freezing to inhibit growth of microorganisms, pasteurization, sugar, salt, and other means of food preservation. Students use basic science in learning about the care and handling of food to prevent infection and disease. They gain an understanding of how nutrients function to maintain health and physical fitness.

Meaning and understanding of aspects of chemistry are acquired through principles underlying food preparation and use of food in the body. A few chemistry related examples include the following: the caloric value of foods; calories as a measurement of energy or heat; the function of metabolism and the dietary regulation of metabolic processes; chemical composition and analysis of foods; food allergies; the function of leavening agents in food cookery; principles related to sugar, starch, vegetable, and protein cookery; and the nature and use of emulsions and colloidal suspensions.

Science comes alive for students in clothing and textiles as they learn how petroleum is used to produce today's modern textiles. Additional applications are explored through the use of textiles on earth and in space. Scientific principles are also used in the area of clothing and textiles as a basis for problem-solving. Examples include determining the ef-

fectiveness of various stain removers classified as solvents, absorbents, or bleaches for various stains and fabrics; the effect of advancing and receding colors on size, or the illusion of line when selecting fabrics and garments; the nature of convex and concave lines to determine whether there is a need for cutting wedges or clipping to make curved seams lie flat; and making machine pressure adjustments when sewing different weight fabrics.

Practical meaning may be given to physics through Consumer and Homemaking Education classes in a variety of ways. Insights to the principles of volume and denisty are gained in relation to food preparation and digestion. The physics principles of conduction and convection may be reinforced and applied to size and shape of cooking utensils and materials from which they are made. Other examples of related learnings include air pressure related to cooking, use of many kinds of temperature controls, cooking with microwaves and electronics, and cooking and freezing with gas and electricity.

In the area of housing and home furnishings, application of science principles is readily implemented through the problem-solving approach. Several examples include principles related to the diffusion of light when selecting lighting fixtures, lamps and lamp shades, or window treatments; choosing soaps or detergents based upon their effectiveness in hard and/or soft water; the understanding of friction in use of motor driven appliances; and protecting household items from rust or corrosion.

Through experiences focused on the practical application of science principles, new meaning is established for learners. Personal meaning not only facilitates learning, it nurtures adoption and practice of the principles learned.

Analytical skills. Analytical skills are founded in logical and scientific thinking. Although the areas of mathematics and sciences provide a basis for the analytical process use of such skills is not limited to these areas. Analytical thinking is readily integrated into any field. In Consumer and Homemaking Education classes, analytical skills are developed through present-day and future-oriented situations. In this context, students have the opportunity to focus on the process of developing an ability to judge the validity of ideas, the viability of alternatives, or the merits of solutions to problems which have realistic meaning for them. Frequently, mathematical and scientific skills are used in the analytical process as a resource toward the solution or conclusion of a problem or dilemma. In so doing, a dual purpose is served. Learners are motivated to use their basic skills, thus, reinforcing that learning. Further, they experience the development of higher order thinking skills such as inference, analysis, and synthesis in solving problems faced by individuals and families.

The analytical process provides a framework and directiveness to thinking. In Consumer and Homemaking Education classes, the analytical process establishes a basis for rational thinking, thereby, enhancing communication and understanding among and between individuals in the home and work place.

Life management skills. An increase in the complexity of living from technical, social, and economic changes has been paralleled by the growing need for individuals and families to acquire life management skills. Examples of life management skills included in the various areas of Consumer and Homemaking Education programs are making decisions, establishing personal priorities, assessing and allocating resources, setting personal goals and standards, budgeting,

consuming wisely, using goods and services, communicating effectively, resolving conflict, managing crises, and planning careers. The quality of human life and self-perceptions of success hinge on such skills.

Through Consumer and Homemaking Education programs, students are provided with the context for applying life management skills. That context includes an examination of role patterns of family members, variations in family structure, unique needs during each stage of the family life cycle, and family interdependence with other systems as a basis for interpreting managerial approaches.

Within Consumer and Homemaking Education classes, students gain experience in identifying alternatives, recognizing assets and liabilities, and processing information to reduce uncertainty in decision-making. In all areas of Consumer and Homemaking Education, students investigate consumer issues through a variety of learning activities. They develop skills in financial planning and the use of money in addition to exploring insurance, investment, and banking services. Crisis management skills may be learned through distinguishing between constructive and destructive responses to a loss of earnings. Conflict resolution techniques may be learned in the context of resolving control, allocation, and spending of family finances or use of resources.

Attention is given to the quality and scarcity of resources in assessing their use, especially natural and nonrenewable resources. Such considerations are applied to household energy consumption, selection of appliances and furnishings, and the related care and maintenance inherently required to meet or maintain personal standards.

The learning of goal setting strategies is carried out in conjunction with establishing

personal priorities through activities ranging from enhancing self-esteem to career planning. Students are also exposed to the interrelationship between the work and home environment and are provided opportunities to learn skills which enhance both arenas. Such skills as group planning, management, and cooperation related to family living and future careers or work situations are incorporated in learning activities in a variety of ways. This is evidenced by FHA/HERO members planning and implementing their programs of work both within the classroom and out in the community. Such activities not only enable them to practice their communication and management skills, but also to develop their leadership potential.

Summary

Consumer and Homemaking Education is an applied field of study. Like other applied fields, it draws from the basic sciences, arts, and humanities those theories and principles which are necessary to its conceptual structure. The validity of Consumer and Homemaking Education rests in the validity of those basic disciplines. Its uniqueness lies in the perspective in which those basic notions are utilized: "human needs are studied from the perspective of the individual and the family" (Barkley, 1983, p. 18–19). The Consumer and Homemaking Education perspective is an essential characterisitc of the program. It provides a context of individual and family living which enables students to be actively involved in self-development in ways that give purpose and motivation to learning. The meaning and usefulness of sciences, arts, and humanities are perceived by the student in the context in which each is experienced. Thus, one gains both greater understanding and utilization of the basic disciplines when they are applied within one's own life. (Moxley, 1984)

The development of a positive self-image is enhanced through Consumer and Homemaking Education programs. By learning how to care for their bodies, to improve their appearance, to develop social skills, and to apply basic skills, students gain more self-confidence. These skills enable them to make decisions which will affect their success as homemakers and wage-earners. It further develops a sense of family and provides abilities essential to function effectively.

> The family is the primary nurturing group and the single most important source of informal learning for the majority of persons. It provides the environment in which essential skills such as language, ability to form concepts and solve problems, habits of study, perserverance and control of emotions are first learned. Values, moral behavior, motivation to work and succeed, a sense of achievement and self-worth are all established in the family. Good health and nutrition are also dependent upon the family environment and resources. All of these are essential for successful learning. (Paolucci, Bubolz, & Rainey, 1976)

Current ideas of bigger is better, upward mobility is easy, and the "me first" syndrome are no longer feasible in today's society. As there is an increase in the awareness and knowledge of the limitations of natural resources, effects of economic fluctuations, and needs of the future, it is necessary for individuals to carefully explore and examine realistic ideas for successful living. It is toward these aims that Consumer and Homemaking Education is directed.

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